Accessible Print Materials

Guidelines to Accommodate People of All Abilities

Keep It Simple

The Message

- **Give the most important information first**

- **Limit the number of messages to 3-4 per document**
  - Include only what the audience needs to know and do
  - Provide one idea at a time
  - Lists should be no longer than 3-7 items
  - Keep messages short and simple

- **Clearly state the recommended actions and what will be gained by following them**
  - Emphasize what audience should do, not what they should not do
  - Be encouraging

■ **Choose words carefully**

- Use concrete, practical examples

- Limit jargon and technical language

- Language should be clear and consistent

- Use language and examples that are familiar to the audience

- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations

- Limit the use of statistics or mathematical concepts – instead, use words like many, most, half

■ **Limit the use of symbols – symbols may not be understood by everyone**

■ **Limit the use of quotation marks and hyphens[1]**

■ **Use the active voice whenever possible**

Examples:

Say this:	Not this:
High blood pressure	Hypertension
Wear a helmet when on a bike.	When biking or participating in other wheeled sports, always wear protective head gear.
Children watch about 2 hours of TV a day.	Children watch TV for an average of 1.96 hours a day.
Fred has a body mass index (BMI) of 22. A BMI between 19 and 25 is considered healthy.	Fred has a BMI of 22.
Wash fruits and vegetables before you cut or peel them.[2] (active voice)	Fruits and vegetables should be washed before they are cut or peeled.[2] (passive voice)
This guide will teach you how to have a healthy pregnancy and prevent possible complications.	Pregnancy guide.

Visuals

- **Visuals should be easy to understand and close to the corresponding text**

- **Use photographs to show real life events**

- **Illustrations or drawings can be used if they are simple**
  - Cartoons can be misinterpreted and should be avoided
  - Photographs work best for showing "real life" events, people and emotions

- **Use high quality visuals so the resolution is sharp with clear content**

- **Use circles or arrows to point out key information**

- **Use visuals to emphasize or explain the text**
  - One message per visual
  - Label visuals with captions
  - Show positive actions (not the actions you **do not** want audience to take)

Drink water

Walk

Have an apple
for lunch

■ **Visuals should be representative and sensitive of the target audience**

■ **Use realistic images**

Diabetic foot check

Physical exam

Text

- **Use 12-14 point font**

- **For headings, use a font size at least 2 points larger than the main text**

- **Fonts:**
  - Do not use fancy or script fonts like *This* or *This*
  - Do not use ALL CAPS
  - Use correct punctuation
  - Use **bold** to emphasize words
  - Limit the use of *italics* or <u>underline</u>
  - Use dark letters on a light background

Layout and Design

- **Materials should be visually attractive with the main message on the front cover**

- **Messages should be easy to act on, easy to remember and in a logical order**

- **Use headings and subheadings or columns to break up text**

- **Leave more space above headings than below them**

- **Leave plenty of white space and adequate margins – do not fill the page with text**

- **Make the text easy for the eye to follow**
  - Use bulleted lists
  - Align text to the left side of the page
  - Use columns if needed
  - Place key information in a text box

Readability

- **Conduct a readability test of the materials. Materials should be written at 4th or 5th grade reading levels[3]**
  - Many word processing software programs have reading level tools included
  - To conduct a readability test by hand, instructions are located in Appendix C of **Simply Put**

- **Test materials with members of the target audience**

Print Materials for People with Partial Sight[4]

- **Below are additional tips for those with impaired vision:**
  - Text should have high color contrast with the background, white/black is preferable
  - Type should be large print, which is a minimum of 16-18 point font
  - Avoid close letter spacing or close spacing between lines of text
  - Do not use glossy or shiny paper
  - Use standard, non-decorative fonts

Unless otherwise noted, the information in this document is based on:

Simply Put, A Guide for Creating Easy-to-Understand Materials
www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/simply_put.pdf

Other references:

[1]   Accessible Print Materials, Formatting Guidelines to Accommodate All Audiences
www.pcar.prg/sites/default/files/file/TA/Creating-Accessible-Print-Materials-DoH-Massachussets.pdf

[2]   CDC Clear Communication Index, A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products User Guide
www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Clear CommunicationIndex/ClearCommunication UserGuideMay2013.pdf

[3]   National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research
www.ncddr.org/products/researchexchange/v08n03/2_materials.html

[4]   Lighthouse International, Designing for People with Partial Sight
www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/making-text-legible/

Additional resources:

WebAIM, Information and resources to ensure web accessibility
webaim.org/intro/

The North Carolina Office on Disability & Health

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health | Children and Youth Branch

PHONE
919-707-5600